

REdeployment of FORces to GERmany (REFORGER):

Military Exercises with a Diplomatic Purpose

Research Thesis

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Acronym Guide

AAF (Army Airfield)

AFB (Air Force Base)

CINCSTRIKE (Commander in Chief United States Strike Forces)

CONARC (Continental Army Command)

DCSLOG (Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics)

DCSPER (Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel)

DPQ (Defense Planning Questionnaire)

DRF (Division Ready Force)

DRRF (Division Rapid Reaction Force)

EDC (European Defense Community)

FTX (Field Training Exercise)

JTF (Joint Task Force)

MCG (Movement Control Group)

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

NSC-68 (National Security Council 68)

OPLAN 629 (Operational Plan 629)

POMCUS (Pre-Positioned Materiel Configured in Unit Sets)

REFORGER (Return of Forces to Germany)

RRF (Ready Reaction Force)

STRIKE (Swift Tactical Reaction in Every Known Environment)

USAFSTRIKE (United States Air Force STRIKE Forces)

USAREUR (United States Army Europe)

USARSTRIKE (United States Army STRIKE Forces)

USCINCEUR (United States Commander in Chief Europe)

US-EUCOM (United States European Command)

WEU (Western European Union)

Introduction

From 1969 to 1993, the United States and NATO conducted a series of military exercises for the purpose of preparing to defend Western Europe against a possible Soviet invasion. The series of annual exercises dubbed REFORGER (Redeployment of Forces to Germany) utilized units that were based in the United States to rapidly deploy to West Germany to conduct maneuvers. However, this was not the only purpose of REFORGER. Archival documents suggest that another, and perhaps more important intended outcome, was to instill confidence in NATO countries regarding the U.S. commitment to the defense of Western Europe.

Historians have examined REFORGER in the larger context of evolving Cold War military doctrine, Allied foreign policies, and even the danger of a singular exercise that almost led to nuclear war.¹ However, historians have not yet explored the REFORGER exercises as a unique historical event, nor have they examined their impact on U.S.-NATO relations during the Cold War. This thesis aims to shed light on the significance of the REFORGER exercises on Western defense strategy during the Cold War, the logistics that made them possible, and the intended impact of these exercises on the diplomatic relationship between the United States and its NATO allies. However, the REFORGER exercises did not occur in isolation from the larger events and context surrounding the Cold War; therefore, certain events relating to the origins of the Cold War, the foundation and necessity of NATO, larger issues of U.S.-European relations, and U.S. Army Cold War policies and doctrine that led up to the first exercise in 1969 form essential background to them.

¹ Nate Jones, ed., *Able Archer 83: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise That Almost Triggered Nuclear War* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

When considering U.S. and European cooperation in these joint military exercises, one must understand the events leading up to the foundation of NATO and the context that made these exercises necessary. After the fall of the Third Reich in 1945, Germany was divided among the four major Allied Powers: the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and France. The three Western allies were agreed on what the post-war world should look like. Nations would have the right to govern themselves in democracies and international cooperation would lead to new levels of economic development and trade. President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill fleshed out these terms at the Atlantic Conference of August 1941.² agreeing to the Atlantic Charter meant that the United Kingdom would eventually have to eventually release its colonial territories, allowing the United States to gain more power through economic trade and development with the emerging Third World.³ Churchill did not prefer this outcome, stating, “I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. For that task, if ever it were prescribed, someone else would have to be found, and under a democracy I suppose the nation would have to be consulted.”⁴ While he clearly disagreed with Britain granting sovereignty to its colonial charges, Churchill understood that he needed to cooperate with Roosevelt to gain U.S. support for the war against Nazi Germany and signed the charter anyway.

As the Cold War progressed through the late-1940s and 1950s, the United States gradually replaced Britain as the leader of the West, with the Suez Canal crisis of 1956 being the key event. On 29 October 1956 Britain and France, without the United States’ knowledge,

² “The Avalon Project : THE ATLANTIC CHARTER,” Text, accessed April 2, 2021, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>.

³ David Reynolds, “The Wartime Anglo-American Alliance,” in *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1986), 30.

⁴ Winston Churchill, “Prime Minister Winston Churchill Speech at the Mansion House,” November 10, 1942, Mansion House, London, U.K., <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1942/421110b.html>.

invaded Egypt in conjunction with Israeli forces. President Eisenhower was furious and demanded the Anglo-French alliance to withdraw their forces; simultaneously Eisenhower ordered the Sixth Fleet to put pressure on the Anglo-French fleet while ordering a series of economic sanctions against the two nations. These actions, along with diplomatic pressure through the United Nations, led to an Anglo-French withdrawal.⁵ After this event, it became clear that the United States had eclipsed Great Britain as the predominant power in the West.

Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin opposed this post-war world order and quickly reneged on agreements he made at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. He determined that the nations liberated by Soviet troops should remain under Soviet military control and he began to establish communist political systems that answered to the Soviet Union.⁶ It soon became clear that the Soviet Union had no intention of upholding its promises to allow the nations of Eastern Europe to determine their own destiny. By the end of 1945, the Cold War between the capitalist West and communist East was already underway.

U.S. involvement in Europe was a complete reversal of the isolationist policies that the United States held before World War II; it was also a change that the events of the aftermath of World War II necessitated. There is debate among historians regarding the origins of the Cold War and whether or not the conflict could have been avoided by greater attempts at cooperation with the Soviet Union. David Shi and George Tindal, however, argue that “the onset of the cold war seems to have been inevitable. America’s commitment to capitalism, political self-determination, and religious freedom conflicted dramatically with the Soviet Union’s preference for controlling its neighbors, enforcing ideological conformity, and prohibiting religious

⁵ Cole C. Kingseed, *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

⁶ J. B. Hoptner, “SOVIET POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE SINCE 1945,” *Journal of International Affairs* 8, no. 1 (1954): 98.

practices.”⁷ If the United States was going to remain the defender of Western democracies and the belief that all nations had the right to adopt a governmental system of their choosing, then it would inevitably be on a collision course with an expansionist Soviet Union.

In the immediate years following the outbreak of the Cold War, tensions between the West and Soviet Union grew. State Department officials made it clear that Stalin was determined to keep tensions between the ideological opposites high, because it helped bolster the power of his totalitarian regime. In a now famous article authored anonymously, director of the State Department Planning Staff George Kennan argued that the best policy to counter Soviet designs was to contain the spread of communism through the superior economic power of the United States and its allies.⁸ In a March 1947 speech before the U.S. Congress, President Truman requested that the United States give \$400 million in aid to Turkey and Greece. This was the beginning of the Truman Doctrine, and was the first attempt to contain the spread of communism through the might of the American economy. Moreover, it set the precedent for the United States to be the leader in the fight against communism. Truman said, “I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.”⁹

The policies in the Truman administration were not just geared toward nations that were facing active communist threats, but all European nations that were under threat from Soviet

⁷ David Emory Shi and George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 1984), 1003.

⁸ X, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1947, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3629.

⁹ Henry S. Truman, “The Truman Doctrine,” March 12, 1947, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/harrystrumantrumandocctrine.html>.

expansionism. George C. Marshall, Secretary of State under Truman, laid out a plan that would secure U.S. alliances with many major European powers in a speech at Harvard University in June 1947. The subsequent European Recovery Plan, colloquially referred to as the Marshall Plan, was an economic booster for those countries that were hit hard during World War II. It aimed to build up the economies and peoples of Europe and to enhance their trade with the United States, which Truman saw as imperative to maintaining U.S. economic strength. In 1948, after the fall of a democratic government in Czechoslovakia, the last of its kind in Eastern Europe, the U.S. Congress approved the plan and appropriated \$13 billion dollars in European aid.¹⁰ Economist Barry Eichengreen and colleagues note that Marshall plan aid helped European industrial output grow by 55 percent in just four years.¹¹ This was the greatest period of economic growth in European history, a true recovery from the devastation of World War II.¹² The Marshall Plan was, essentially, the most effective way for the United States to ensure it had strong allies in Europe, the presumptive front line in the ongoing struggle with the Soviet Union.

Stalin correctly believed that the Marshall Plan was designed to weaken his position in Europe. The primary goal of the plan was to aid U.S. allies, and the intended second order consequence of that goal was the strengthening of a coalition to counter the Soviet Union. In response, Stalin ordered a blockade around the perimeter of West Berlin in the summer of 1948, with its American, British, and French zones united into one. If successful, the blockade would halt the flow of food and other essential supplies to Berlin, leading to a Soviet takeover of the

¹⁰ Barry Eichengreen et al., "The Marshall Plan: Economic Effects and Implications for Eastern Europe and the Former USSR," *Economic Policy* 7, no. 14 (1992): 13, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1344512>.

¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹² Ibid., 48.

pre-war German capital. In response, the Truman administration began an airlift that provided 2,223,000 daily tons of supplies to West Berlin over the course of thirteen months.¹³

The Berlin Airlift was in part successful because of the Allied ability to work together in shipping supplies to West Berlin, and it quickly became clear that the most effective tool in containing the Soviet threat was sustained political and military cooperation. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, commonly known as NATO, became the premier institution to protect Western Europe from the Soviet Union with the signing of the Washington Treaty on 4 April 1949.¹⁴ The first member nations were among those that benefitted most from the Marshall Plan; the unifying ideology of Western democracy brought the countries together; and a strong and economically powerful international leader, the United States, backed up NATO's conventional military strength with a nuclear umbrella. The purpose of NATO was mutual defense; an attack on one nation would be seen as an attack on all nations, and while the USSR did not have much to fear from the military might of the Netherlands or Luxembourg, the United States was a major strategic competitor it could not ignore. The United States had committed itself to the defense of Western Europe and helped in the formation of the global institutions that would manage the Cold War.¹⁵

After the formation of NATO, the Cold War, and the U.S. approach to it, constantly evolved. The Soviet acquisition of nuclear weaponry in 1949 prompted President Truman to order the National Security Council to draft a report that would examine the role and responsibilities of the United States in the Cold War. The result was National Security Council

¹³ John Steven Brunhaver, "The Berlin Airlift: Lifeline from the Sky" (Air University Press, 1996), 21, JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13825.9>.

¹⁴ "What Is NATO?" Accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html>.

¹⁵ Lawrence A. Kaplan, "The United States and the Origins of NATO 1946-1949," *The Review of Politics* 31, no. 2 (1969): 210-22.

Memorandum 68 (NSC-68). NSC-68 determined that the Soviet Union was growing as a threat, especially with the buildup of atomic weapons, and advised that the United States bolster its own military capabilities and further develop its containment policies.¹⁶

The United States quadrupled its defense spending during the Korean War (1950-1953), operationalizing containment as a military strategy as well as a political and economic one.¹⁷ The Eisenhower administration, however, viewed this level of spending as unsustainable. It maintained that the key to the global conflict against communism was containment but changed the way in which the United States would prosecute the strategy. Newly elected President Dwight Eisenhower, along with Secretary of State John Dulles, determined that threatening massive nuclear retaliation was the most economical way to prosecute containment. Historian Ingo Trauschweizer writes, “After the Korean War, the Army defined its primary mission as deterrence in Central Europe.”¹⁸ Moreover, “Deterrence has generally been understood as a function of nuclear arsenals.”¹⁹

Deterrence linked to massive retaliation was fraught with major issues that NATO fleshed out with military exercises. Exercise Carte Blanche, which NATO executed in the summer of 1955, was designed to determine the effects of a nuclear war in Europe. The result was a catastrophic destruction of German territory.²⁰ It quickly became clear that the Allied powers would have to adjust their strategy to not only rely on nuclear deterrence but adopt more conventional deterrents in an effort to limit the damage to NATO territory in the event of a war

¹⁶ “Milestones: 1899–1913 - Office of the Historian,” accessed November 1, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/war>.

¹⁷ Allan Reed Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York : London: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan, 1984), 453.

¹⁸ Ingo Trauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army: Building Deterrence for Limited War*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

with the Soviet Union. General Maxwell Taylor, Eisenhower's Army Chief of Staff from 1955-1959, was among the first to openly criticize Eisenhower's policies of Massive Retaliation in his book.

The Uncertain Trumpet, published in 1959, Taylor criticized the strategy of Eisenhower's New Look and recommended the strategy that would see the United States, and its allies, through the remainder of the Cold War. As seen in Exercise Carte Blanche, Taylor determined that the threatened use of nuclear weapons to ensure U.S. national security had a grave and fatal flaw.²¹ Taylor argued that Massive Retaliation and nuclear supremacy were ineffective, with the best example being the conventional war fought in Korea proving that an atomic monopoly did not prevent states from engaging in conventional wars.²² Taylor instead recommended a strategy which came to be known as Flexible Response:

The National Military Program of Flexible Response should contain at the outset an unqualified renunciation of reliance on the strategy of Massive Retaliation. It should be made clear that the United States will prepare itself to respond anywhere, any-time, with weapons and forces appropriate to the situation. Thus, we would restore to warfare its historic justification as a means to create a better world upon the successful conclusion of hostilities.²³

Taylor laid out how the United States and its western allies would benefit from the change in doctrine. When elected in 1960, President John F. Kennedy agreed with Taylor's assessment and saw in him the strategic mind he wanted leading the nation's armed forces as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. With Flexible Response being the new strategy of the United States, the NATO military command eventually adopted a solution of ground forces in a Forward Defense

²¹ Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 1960), 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 146.

of the Inter-German border, albeit not without some hesitation on the part of those who doubted the ability of NATO ground forces to halt a Soviet offensive.²⁴

The Kennedy administration committed the United States to the Forward Defense of West Germany.²⁵ Now that Flexible Response demanded a commitment to conventional forces, an adequate defense force would have to remain ready for battle, and rapid response forces would have to quickly deploy to reinforce the front in Germany. This need for a rapid response force was the origin of the REFORGER exercises, and although the first REFORGER was not conducted until 1969, it was clear that the United States was veering away from massive retaliation in favor of a more measured and less destructive approach, thereby necessitating rapid and massive deployment of conventional forces to Europe in event of war.

The necessity of forces in a forward defensive posture was a major factor in the creation of the REFORGER exercises, but the goal of Forward Defense was achievable only with a standing army in Germany, begging the question of why the United States redeployed more than 34,000 troops from Germany back to the United States in 1967. Congressional calls for force reductions in Europe in response to the cost of maintaining troops along the Inter-German border and the fiscal requirements of the ongoing Vietnam War necessitated this redeployment.²⁶ Archival documents show that the United States' NATO allies had concerns in 1969 about the U.S. commitment to Western European defense; these documents also suggest that these concerns date back to the original congressionally mandated force reductions in 1967.²⁷

²⁴ Trauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army*, 44.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁷ AmEmbassy Rome to USCINCEUR, USMISSION NATO, and CINCUSAREUR BONN, "REFORGER I: Italian Press Treatment: Two Critical Articles," REFORGER Regional 1969, Entry P447, Box 117, RG 306, NARA II.

The 1967 trilateral agreement between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Federal Republic of Germany assuaged any concerns of U.S. commitment, for the time being at least. The United States would assign the 24th Infantry Division to the defense of Western Europe, with one reinforced brigade stationed in Germany and the rest of the division stationed in the United States. Troops based in the United States would maintain a high degree of readiness and would be prepared to deploy to Germany in fewer than thirty days. The equipment for the entire division would remain in Germany at POMCUS (Pre-Positioning Of Materiel Configured in Unit Sets) sites. Once a year, the U.S. based brigades would redeploy to Germany, draw their equipment from the POMCUS sites, and take part in an exercise to determine the ability and readiness of the division to deploy and defend Western Europe when necessary. The brigade based in Germany the previous year would rotate back to the United States, and a recently deployed brigade would remain on the line of Forward Defense.²⁸ This agreement led to the first REFORGER exercise and created the main tool for the conventional defense of Western Europe. REFORGER would grow to become a pivotal part of the U.S. military commitment to NATO.

Historiography and Methodology

Historians and military analysts have written about the REFORGER exercises on numerous occasions; however, the focus is always on REFORGER as another example of U.S. deployment capability, evolution of the Cold War Army, the necessity of Western European defense, or, in some cases, magnified views of individual exercises that were more impactful than others. There does not seem to be any secondary sources that focus on the importance of the

²⁸ “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XIII, Western Europe Region - Office of the Historian,” accessed July 25, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v13/d249>.

REFORGER exercises as a series of events, or as a key influencer in the U.S./NATO diplomatic relationship.

Historian Ingo Tauschweizer, in *The Cold War U.S. Army: Building Deterrence for Limited War*, writes about the REFORGER exercises in the context of evolving post World War II military doctrine and the changing of emphasis away from Mutually Assured [nuclear] Destruction in the 1950s to the need for conventional defense forces. Tauschweizer writes, “Robert McNamara, who championed the REFORGER Plan, nevertheless hoped that reliance on the strategic and theater nuclear deterrents could be minimized.”²⁹ His analysis of the doctrinal origins of REFORGER are extensive, but his writing does not show the diplomatic influencers for the exercises, which was to convince Western Europe and NATO of the U.S. commitment to defense against the growing Soviet threat. Tauschweizer goes on to stress the importance of maintaining a conventional warfighting capability against the Soviet Union to avoid the dangers of a nuclear war, but he does not go into detail on how the REFORGER exercises were conducted from an operational or tactical level.³⁰

The only other significant text that analyzes the REFORGER exercises is *Able Archer 83: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise that Almost Triggered Nuclear War*, by Nate Jones. This book illustrates how a large-scale NATO exercise in 1983, dubbed Autumn Forge, had the Soviets convinced that the United States and NATO were preparing for a nuclear strike against the USSR. Jones writes that, “The largest of these exercises was known as REFORGER 83 which occurred during the final phases of Autumn Forge; it included a momentous ‘show of resolve’ in the face of a hypothetical Soviet invasion, airlifting 19,000 troops and 1,500 tons of

²⁹ Tauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army*, 186.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

cargo from the United States to Europe to simulate a response to a conventional war.”³¹ Jones fails to mention that the United States and NATO conducted these exercises for thirteen years prior to Autumn Forge and was already adept at this large scale redeployment of forces. Nevertheless, REFORGER 83 was an outlier in the series of exercises, in that it was almost a Cuban Missile Crisis of the 1980s.

The remainder of secondary sources that mention the REFORGER exercises are written by a handful of military analysts who look at REFORGER as an example of countering Russian aggression in the Cold War and how something similar could be used to counter the geo-political threat of a modern Russia. A good example of this is *Permanent Deterrence: The US and NATO Response* by Former Deputy Secretary General of NATO Alexander Vershbow and Supreme Allied Commander Europe Philip M. Breedlove. The report shows the NATO and U.S. Force posture in Europe prior to 2014 and mentions the importance of REFORGER in a defense posture during the Cold War.³²

The coverage and writing on REFORGER uses the exercises as just one example in the larger context of the Cold War and European defense. The lack of context necessitates a deeper analysis into the diplomatic origins of the exercises, along with an analysis of the evolving logistic network that facilitated the ever-growing exercises. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the historical narrative and uses a mix of archival sources gathered from the National Archives II in College Park, Maryland; the archives at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; and the NATO online archives. Some of the primary source documents were previously classified and were provided for use in research under the Freedom of

³¹ Jones, *Able Archer* 83, 25.

³² Alexander R. Vershbow and Philip M. Breedlove, “The U.S. and NATO Response, Permanent Deterrence” (Atlantic Council, 2019), 23, JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/resrep20950.8>.

Information Act. I have used secondary sources to gather and provide background information on the context of REFORGER within the Cold War. I also conducted interviews to provide a personal understanding of the REFORGER exercises from the perspective of U.S. military personnel who took part in various individual exercises.

The Diplomacy of REFORGER

The U.S.-NATO alliance was one born out of necessity. During World War II, the United States and Great Britain came together to combat a common enemy, one whose values were antithetical to liberal democracy. The establishment of NATO in 1949 can be seen as the culmination and formalization of this wartime alliance. Western nations united to deter another common enemy, one whose threatened expansion jeopardized Western Europe. This does not mean, however, that the alliance between these nations was without flaw. Many Western European states doubted the United States' commitment to European defense and became fearful of their ability to defend Europe should the Soviets choose to expand west.³³ As was mentioned in the introduction, no historian has ever analyzed the impact of REFORGER on the diplomatic relationship between the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Nor has any historian viewed REFORGER as a tool to better relations between the U.S. and NATO. This section will not only present the origins of REFORGER as a diplomatic exercise, but it will argue that concerns of U.S. commitment were prevalent throughout much of the Cold War, and that the exercises were viewed as fundamental to U.S.-NATO diplomatic relations during this period.

³³ AmEmbassy Rome to USCINCEUR, USMISSION NATO, and CINCUSAREUR BONN, "REFORGER I: Italian Press Treatment: Two Critical Articles," REFORGER Regional 1969, Entry P447, Box 117, RG 306, NARA II.

The commitment of annually redeployed forces from the United States to West Germany began with a series of trilateral talks between the United States, United Kingdom, and the Federal Republic of Germany. Georg Duckwitz, Head of the Eastern Department in the German Foreign Ministry, John McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, and George Thomson, the British Secretary of State for Commonwealth affairs met from October 1966 to April 1967 to determine strategies, forces, aid, and procedures for the NATO alliance. Among these strategies presented, the talks created a detailed plan for the defense of Western Europe against Soviet aggression. This evolved into the series of REFORGER exercises that continued until 1993.³⁴

According to the Trilateral Agreement, the United States would withdraw up to 35,000 military personnel from Europe, but would ensure that the units remained committed to NATO.³⁵ In the case of the 24th Infantry Division, this meant that one brigade would remain in West Germany while the remainder of the division moved back to the United States.³⁶ REFORGER was essential to practice the redeployment of 24th Infantry Division troops from the United States to the FRG to minimize their response time in an emergency. The goal was to respond to Soviet aggression with full deployment in less than thirty days. This number grew to include multiple divisions as the REFORGER exercises evolved. This redeployment of forces was necessary to maintain the defenses of Western Europe, but documents suggest that congressional budgetary restrictions concerned NATO allies and annual redeployment of forces alleviated these concerns.

³⁴ "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XIII, Western Europe Region - Office of the Historian."

³⁵ "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XIII, Western Europe Region - Office of the Historian," sec. 4.

³⁶ Ibid.

According to a classified telegram from Secretary of State William Rogers to American Ambassador to NATO Robert Ellsworth, “The budget reductions caused a delay in submission of our 1969 DPQ [Defense Planning Questionnaire, JR] reply and this tardiness has fed European concerns about future U.S.-NATO commitments.”³⁷ While this document is from a communique dated two years after the trilateral talks, it alludes to continuing concerns of NATO allies regarding the U.S. commitment. Moreover, an executive background paper for the Special Session of the North Atlantic Council in November 1969 states that, “Our NATO Allies have recently been more uneasy than usual about possible U.S. force reduction in Europe.”³⁸ These concerns came from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield’s proposed force reductions in Europe, and it became the job of U.S. ambassadors and presidents alike to assure NATO allies of the U.S. commitment, despite continued threats of budget cuts from Congress.

Concerns regarding the U.S. commitment to NATO were prevalent throughout the Cold War due to belt-tightening in Congress. A telegram When? from Acting Secretary of State Charles W. Robinson to the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, George Mahon, perfectly explains the concerns of the United States’ NATO allies and the importance of REFORGER for the Alliance as well as for the defense of Western Europe:

I have learned of the pending proposal before your committee to discontinue funding for the REFORGER and CRESTED CAP strategic mobility exercises. In our view, this would have a serious and detrimental impact not only on our future military capability to reinforce Europe, but also on the integrity of our NATO commitments. It is a matter of special sensitivity to the West Germans and the British because of our 1967 Trilateral agreement under which we agreed to return U.S.-based forces to Germany annually. I understand Secretary Rumsfeld has solicited your support in this matter and I join him in strongly urging that you

³⁷ SECSTATE WASHDC to ANATO, “U.S. Force Commitments to NATO and U.S. Reply to DPQ 1969,” October, 1969, REFORGER Regional 1969, Entry P447, Box 117, RG 306, NARA II.

³⁸ Special Session of the North Atlantic Council, November 5-6, 1969. “Background Paper, U.S. Troops in Europe,” October 28, 1969, REFORGER Regional 1969, Entry P447, Box 117, RG 306 NARA II.

give most careful consideration to this militarily and politically significant aspect of our government's contribution to NATO and Western European defense.³⁹

The telegram, dated in 1976, shows that members of several executive administrations during the Cold War era understood the importance of REFORGER in not only maintaining the military defensive posture in Western Europe, but also in maintaining good relations with Western allies, principally the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany. The presidents and their appointees were not, however, the only U.S. officials to understand the importance of REFORGER to the diplomatic and military relationship with Western Europe.

Considering that the United States military planned, executed, and evolved the REFORGER exercises, it stands to reason that military leaders would be aware of the exercises' main goals. Archival documents indicate that those military leaders in charge of the exercises were not only aware of the diplomatic mission, but actively changed which units would be deployed in various European exercises in an attempt to preserve it.

Primary documents from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Central Files, at NARA II, describe in detail the planning, funding, goals, and execution of the REFORGER Exercises. The common theme in these JCS files are difficulties with the provided congressional funding in maintaining military readiness for dual-based units.⁴⁰ Cuts to funding limited the ability of the United States to deploy forces to Germany when needed. It has already been shown that these limits to funding caused concern among the NATO allies, and these documents suggest that U.S. military leaders were aware of the importance of these exercises in maintaining the Alliance.

³⁹ George W. Robinson, "Letter to Chairman of House Appropriations Committee George Mahon," June 7, 1976, P760085-0779, Entry P455, RG 59, NARA II.

⁴⁰ Report by the J-3 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "JCS-Directed Exercise Schedule," March 23, 1970, Joint Chiefs of Staff Official Record, Box 40, JCS Central Files, Decimal 385, RG 218, NARA II.

The main issue in 1970 was the lack of funding to deploy the 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment during REFORGER II. While this squadron was an essential part of the dual-based forces, the JCS realized that deleting the unit from REFORGER II would allow the series of REFORGER exercises to continue. Moreover, the JCS were aware of the 1967 trilateral agreement and were clear that this slight reduction of forces did not violate it, but instead ensured that it was upheld. A JCS memo sent to the Secretary of Defense stated, “The deletion of the 3d Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, from the Exercise REFORGER II troop list presents no difficulty under the terms of the 1967 Trilateral Agreements.”⁴¹ This shows an awareness among military leaders of the diplomatic agreement between the United States and its NATO allies, supporting the claim that the military exercise of redeploying troops from the United States to Germany was a well-established diplomatic tool.

This series of documents from the JCS also showed a continued emphasis on the REFORGER and CRESTED CAP exercises, the latter being the air force portion of the annual redeployment exercises, and how reduced funding would not impact these exercises even as it caused the cancellation of others:

The JCS Exercise Program has been operating at a reduced level of funding for the past few years... . Under the limited program, large-scale joint exercises (other than REFORGER and CRESTED CAP) designed to test strategic mobility concepts or to develop proficiency in joint operations either have to be cancelled or held at a reduced scope.⁴²

While other military exercises were being scaled back or cancelled, the REFORGER and CRESTED CAP exercises were prioritized to continue. This proves that REFORGER was

⁴¹ Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, “Exercise Car Crew IV,” July 7, 1970, Joint Chiefs of Staff Official Record, Box 40, JCS Central Files, Decimal 385, RG 218, NARA II.

⁴² Report by the J-3 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “JCS-Directed Exercise Schedule,” March 23, 1970, Joint Chiefs of Staff Official Record, Box 40, JCS Central Files, Decimal 385, RG 218, NARA II.

considered essential to the mission of Western European defense. REFORGER, and its air force equivalent, were the sole exercises important enough to survive budget cuts, and this was due to the importance of the U.S.-NATO diplomatic relationship.

This focus on a NATO commitment continued throughout the REFORGER exercises, and military leaders' awareness of this commitment is evident as well. The Final After Action Report for REFORGER III, conducted in 1972, describes all action that was taken in the exercise from the redeployment of troops to Germany from the United States, to the Field Training Exercises (FTX) conducted, and the objectives of the exercise. The commander's comments states, "The value of Exercise REFORGER III cannot be overemphasized. The REFORGER series of exercises have significantly increased our ability to rapidly and effectively augment our European forces in fulfillment of our commitment to NATO."⁴³ This shows an institutional awareness of the U.S. commitment to NATO and the importance of REFORGER in maintaining the alliance. A similar statement of NATO commitment can be seen in the Final After-Action Report from REFORGER 79: Certain Sentinel. The third exercise objective, out of fifteen, in this report is, "To demonstrate U.S. Resolve to defend Europe and honor North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commitments."⁴⁴ This means that reinforcing the NATO commitment was clearly considered to be essential to REFORGER exercises, and all available documents suggest that this commitment did not weaken over time.

Unfortunately, research conducted at the National Archives II and the U.S. Army Heritage Education Center Archives did not yield any primary source information for the later

⁴³ "REFORGER III Final After Action Report," February 25, 1972, U253.2.R443U545 1972, U.S. Army Heritage Education Center.

⁴⁴ "FTX CERTAIN SENTINEL/REFORGER 79 Final After Action Report," August 23, 1978, 4, U253.2.C46U543 1979, U.S. Army Heritage Education Center.

years of REFORGER. The latest available source is the after-action report for REFORGER 85: Central Guardian. This report lists five main objectives for REFORGER 85: Strengthen NATO, Train Realistically, Minimize Maneuver Damage, Enhance Good Will, and Emphasize Safety.⁴⁵ While the after-action reports for REFORGERs 86-93 are still classified with whereabouts unknown, the report from REFORGER 85 shows that the U.S. armed forces had institutionalized the strengthening of the NATO alliance and normalized the use of REFORGER as the main tool to fulfill that objective. From the president down to the military commanders who were running the FTXs, REFORGER was seen as pivotal to the military and diplomatic relationship between the United States and NATO. However, awareness and dissemination of this REFORGER objective was much more widespread.

The early years showed an acknowledgment of importance from the president, presidential appointees, and high-ranking military leaders; however, as the exercise progressed and evolved, the importance was quickly disseminated on a broad level. An article titled, “REFORGER III Fulfills NATO Pledge” from *Armor: the Magazine of Mobile Warfare*, written by Lieutenant Colonel Warren W. Lennon, explains the origins of the REFORGER exercises, how REFORGER III would be conducted, and what units would take part. This is the first indication that REFORGER was marketed to the participating soldiers as a mission with the goal of meeting the NATO commitments made in 1967.⁴⁶ Considering that a number of soldiers participating in REFORGER would have read this, it is clear that the exercises as a tool for

⁴⁵ “After Action Report: Central Guardian (REFORGER 85),” March 15, 1985, U253.2.R4485A48 1985, U.S. Army Heritage Education Center.

⁴⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Warren W. Lennon, “REFORGER III Fulfills NATO Pledge,” *Armor: The Magazine of Mobile Warfare*, no. LXXXI (February 1972): 42.

diplomacy as well as for military effectiveness was well known. This dissemination of REFORGER diplomatic objectives continued into the later years of the exercises.

The 1985 issue of *Translog: The Official Magazine of the Military Traffic Management Command*, opens with an article title, “Why REFORGER,” by Major Charles Rosenblum. In this article Major Rosenblum explains that, “The United States is committed to the annual RETURN of FORces to GERmany to fulfill our 1967 NATO agreement.”⁴⁷ While the REFORGER exercise had evolved to include six infantry divisions, two armored brigades, and one light infantry brigade from the Tennessee National Guard, it was clear that the purpose of REFORGER did not change along with its scale. Major Rosenblum goes on to say that, “Without the exercise we would lose the opportunity to train our troops in a joint venture, we would miss the chance to test new and innovative systems in a realistic environment, and we would fail to fulfill our NATO commitment.”⁴⁸ Not only was the diplomatic commitment to NATO listed as among the top three benefits of REFORGER, but the threat of Soviet expansion is no longer mentioned. The exercises had fully evolved into a practice to aid the modernization of rapid response forces, but most importantly, as a tool to preserve diplomatic relations with Western Europe even as the fear of an expansionist Soviet Union diminished.

The objective of REFORGER as a diplomatic tool was clearly available throughout the series of exercises, but it is important to understand how soldiers involved viewed the exercises and if they were aware of the diplomatic aspect of REFORGER. Colonel Peter R. Mansoor, U.S. Army retired, participated in various capacities in REFORGERs 83, 87, 88, and 90. Serving as a tank platoon leader in the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Bliss, Texas, Mansoor, a

⁴⁷ Major Charles Rosenblum, “Why REFORGER?” *Translog: The Official Magazine of the Military Traffic Management Command* 1985 (March 1985): 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Second Lieutenant at the time, explained how he experienced the exercise. He stated that, “The blocking and tackling of tactics in REFORGER was useless, but in terms of maneuvering at a higher level, the operational level of war, and exercising logistical systems it was fantastic.”⁴⁹ While the operational and logistical aspect of the exercises will be covered later in this thesis, it is important to note that the tactical portion of the exercise was not of great value to the units involved. This, along with previous evidence, suggests that the purpose of REFORGER was not tactical preparation for a Soviet invasion, but part of a diplomatic outreach with Western Europe. Moreover, when asked if there was an awareness of the diplomatic mission, Colonel Mansoor stated that, as a soldier, “You had a vague idea of what was happening at echelons beyond reality, but we were pretty much focused on our military mission.”⁵⁰ Therefore, while there was clearly available information on REFORGER’s diplomatic purpose, during the exercises U.S. forces focused on the task at hand. However, that does not mean that the diplomatic mission was not undertaken at a tactical level; it was instead more personalized and archival documents suggest that this personalization was an intentional aspect on the part of senior military leaders.

An essential aspect of diplomacy is direct contact between the peoples of two allied nations. In REFORGER, Colonel Mansoor explained several ways in which the United States would communicate and interact with various locals. First, while conducting the tactical portion of the exercises, the U.S. units would drive through fields, roads, farms, and other property, sometimes causing maneuver damage. The United States would then dispatch personnel to compensate the locals for their destroyed property, often for a greater amount than the value of the property itself. This led to positive views of the United States with German property

⁴⁹ Peter R. Mansoor, Interview about REFORGER Experience, October 14, 2020.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

owners.⁵¹ Moreover, after completing the Field Training Exercise (FTX) of REFORGER 83, Colonel Mansoor explained that his platoon was selected to join the German 134th Panzer Battalion for gunnery training. This, along with the expected evening socialization, allowed the forces from both sides to interact, thus increasing the bond between the U.S. troops and their German allies.⁵² This suggests that military command was aware of the necessity for cooperation on all levels to ensure a healthy diplomatic relationship. This was cooperation was not, however, only targeted to military personnel.

Throughout the REFORGER exercises and especially in the inaugural REFORGER in 1969, there was a targeted media campaign from United States European Command (U.S.-EUCOM) that was intended to spread the word of REFORGER to citizens of the United States and Germany. An article from the U.S. Army Command Information Unit depicts various photos from the first REFORGER exercise and was used to present the exercise as a diplomatic victory to the public. “In 1969, the United States, with the agreement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, decided to send 35,000 U.S. Army and Air Force military personnel to alternate bases in the United States, where they would remain committed to NATO.”⁵³ While the article depicted the redeployment of troops back to alternate bases in the United States as beneficial to diplomacy, it did not explain why this diplomatic measure was necessary. There were issues of financing 35,000 troops on the Intra-German border, and this redeployment to the United States would serve as a cost-saving measure. However, with the troops still committed to NATO defense, the United States maintained its military commitments, and REFORGER allowed these

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ U.S. ARMY Command Information Unit, “REFORGER 1- Tests and Maneuver at Grafenwoehr,” February 3, 1969, REFORGER Regional 1969, Entry P447, Record Group 306, NARA II.

troops to rehearse a rapid deployment should it have proven necessary, as well as maintaining the diplomatic commitment made in the 1967 trilateral agreement.

The article described various aspects of REFORGER I, from the military commanders charting out the plan to the drawing of equipment from the POMCUS sites. This was clearly an attempt to show the American people the importance of REFORGER and was used to ensure that the exercises continued without detrimental cuts to funding. If the people believed that the exercises were necessary, then they would be continued. Therefore, the dissemination of this information to the American people was done in an effort to bolster the diplomatic relationship between the United States and NATO.

In the REFORGER Regional 1969 files at National Archives II, there were fifteen U.S.-EUCOM press releases describing the REFORGER I FTX, the gathering of equipment from POMCUS sites, the simultaneous Air Force exercise, and all aspects regarding this logistical and military operation. While clearly this publicity presented the picture of a strong defense against the Soviet Union, it also showed the importance of the exercises on a public level, thereby strengthening the connection between the people of the United States and Europe and building the diplomatic relationship through that connection.

The REFORGER exercises were military exercises with a clear military purpose. However, to ignore the diplomatic impact, intention, and origin of the exercises would leave a gap in the history of NATO during the Cold War. At a time when funding for military exercises was being cut, REFORGER alone survived, because it was seen as essential to the relationship between the United States and its Western European allies. These exercises, conducted over the course of twenty-four years, served as a foundation of diplomacy between the western industrialized nations. The remainder of this thesis will cover the military aspects of the

exercises; however, no aspect of the REdeployment of FORces to GERmany was more important than their diplomatic purpose.

REFORGER and Cold War Military Strategy

REFORGER was part of the larger context of Cold War military strategy. US presidents from Harry S. Truman to George. H.W. Bush all believed that it was an essential duty of the United States to defend Western Europe from the Soviet threat. Containment was U.S. policy throughout the Cold War, but the plans to fulfill that policy goal evolved. The Truman administration focused on the establishment of NATO and using the might of the American economy to support and bolster Western Europe. The Eisenhower administration established nuclear first strike policies under the guise of Massive Retaliation, and the Kennedy Administration adopted the strategy of Flexible Response originating in General Maxwell Taylor's book *The Uncertain Trumpet*. As noted earlier the perils of Massive Retaliation led to the policy of Flexible Response; however, a deeper explanation of this strategy's adoption and its relationship with REFORGER is necessary.

Taylor argued that nuclear strikes would result in mass casualties on both sides of a potential European conflict. As Exercise Carte Blanche established, nuclear strikes would lead to the destruction of much of Western Europe, which was antithetical to the mission of defending NATO territory. Taylor therefore determined that a new strategy, one geared away from nuclear arsenals, was needed to attain alliance goals. Taylor first compiled the forces available to fulfill the ends of his proposed strategy. The United States, Western Europe, Iran, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Chinese Nationalists, and South Vietnam had nearly 157 million military age men that could be called upon to fight, compared to only 145 million for the Soviet bloc, giving the

West a slight numerical advantage.⁵⁴ This calculus suggested that a strategy based on conventional warfare and manpower could succeed, provided the military improved planning, equipping, and training for conventional conflict.⁵⁵ Taylor viewed Flexible Response as a way in which the United States could respond to Soviet threats and expansion without the immediate use of nuclear weaponry. The Kennedy administration adopted this idea as policy.

In his 1956 “America’s Stake in Vietnam” speech, then Senator Kennedy stated that “Atomic superiority and the development of new ultimate weapons were not enough [to contain communism].”⁵⁶ Kennedy’s appointment of Taylor as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shows that his negative view of nuclear first-use did not diminish with his ascension to the presidency. To operationalize this policy, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara moved towards enhancing “the armed forces’ ability to move and fight without nuclear weapons.”⁵⁷ While the strategy was sound, President Kennedy understood that nuclear armageddon was still possible and took actions to reduce the risk of nuclear war. Historian Allan R. Millett and colleagues write:

The Kennedy administration also had to face the unpleasant reality that no easy technical solution would eliminate the risk of nuclear war. Kennedy adopted Eisenhower’s negotiations for arms control, especially to limit nuclear testing. In October 1963 the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union agreed to conduct nuclear tests only underground. For the first time in the Nuclear age, arms control had become an important element in American national security policy.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, 135.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁶ John F. Kennedy, “America’s Stake in Vietnam Speech,” June 1, 1956, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/135/JFKPOF-135-015>.

⁵⁷ Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1984), 499–502.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 501.

Flexible response, along with continuing negotiations for arms reduction, limited the threat of nuclear annihilation. The next step was to create a theater strategy for NATO to defend Western Europe against communist expansion.

Parity issues between NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional forces, theater nuclear weapons, and strategic nuclear weapons all influenced the ongoing strategic debate. Nuclear weapons seemingly provided an inexpensive way of defending NATO from a Soviet attack. Furthermore, if the conventional forces required to defend the eastern border of West Germany did not exist, then a strategy of Forward Defense was infeasible.⁵⁹ In this regard, Warsaw Pact forces and materiel outnumbered NATO throughout the Cold War.

Alliance leaders eventually settled on a strategy of Forward Defense to protect Western Europe from a Soviet attack. This strategy was not, however, originally constructed to meet the goals of Flexible Response, but was instead part of a longstanding debate among alliance military and strategic planners. In an article published in the 1985 issue of *Parameters*, historian James Blackwell argues that NATO Forward Defense strategy first appeared in the immediate aftermath of World War II. In 1946, Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, commander of British Occupation Forces in West Germany, submitted a proposal in his role as Chief of the Imperial Staff that argued for a conventional defense of the European Continent with a combination of British and allied forces. The British Ministry of Defense rejected this proposal in 1947, instead advocating for airpower that would weaken an invading Soviet force, even if it meant surrendering Western European territory.⁶⁰ Blackwell writes that, in his reply to the Ministry of

⁵⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Waldo D. Freeman Jr., "NATO Central Region Forward Defense: Correcting the Strategy/Force Mismatch," *National Security Affairs Issue Paper Series 81-3*, 1981, 1.

⁶⁰ James A. Blackwell, Jr., "In the Laps of the Gods: The Origins of NATO Forward Defense," *Parameters, Journal of the U.S. Army War College* 15, no. 4 (1985): 65,

Defense, Montgomery “Not only reiterated his argument for a conventional land defense, he also proposed his formula for effecting his strategy” and that, “This is the earliest public record of an official postwar reference to a Forward Defense of Europe. Thus, at the operational level of war, Montgomery should be credited with being a fundamental proponent of Forward Defense.”⁶¹

Montgomery was appointed the Chairman of the Commanders-in-Chief committee and after vigorous debate between the British and French, it was agreed that they would create a line of Forward Defense as far from French territory as possible. Furthermore, the United States committed to the strategy of Forward Defense of Western Europe with the establishment of NATO in 1949.⁶² This does not mean, however, that the debate on European defense had subsided; in fact, the agreement on Forward Defense shifted the debate to the implementation of the strategy. While Taylor accurately assessed the troop numbers of Allied and Soviet Bloc forces in 1959, NATO strategists were faced with a military imbalance in Central Europe in the early 1950s that posed a serious threat to the alliance. In the early 1950s, NATO fielded 35 brigades, or roughly 125,000 troops, for the defense of Central Europe, compared with the Soviet Union fielding nearly three times as many in the region.⁶³

NATO approved the strategy of Forward Defense at the Council of Lisbon in February of 1952.⁶⁴ This approval sparked another debate between western military strategists: whether the Forward Defense of Western Europe should be mobile or positional.

<https://search.proquest.com/openview/0edb940210cd1b20db251b7000c34f3e/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1819217>.

⁶¹ Ibid., 66.

⁶² Ibid., 66.

⁶³ Patrick Joseph Geary, “NATO Battlefield Strategy for the Conventional Defense of Central Europe,” MA Thesis, Univ. of Richmond, 1987, 39.

⁶⁴ Blackwell, Jr., “In the Laps of the Gods: The Origins of NATO Forward Defense,” 69.

A mobile defense, which the British suggested, would have allowed NATO forces to reduce the numbers of Soviet invaders through delaying tactics, and to make a stand at the Rhine River against a weakened force, thus negating the lack of parity in conventional forces. The French, represented by General De Lattre de Tassigny, advocated for a positional defense closer to the Intra-German border and farther from the French frontier.⁶⁵ This would have ensured that French territory was farther from the front lines. However, a Forward Defense at the Intra-German border would have been difficult to conduct without German forces, so the United States began advocating for the rearming of West Germany to allow it to participate in Western European defense.⁶⁶ The French were vehemently opposed to this plan out of a fear of future German belligerency.⁶⁷ Moreover, Charles DeGaulle, a French nationalist, contended that the United States did not intend to defend the European continent, but instead used the delaying tactic as “cover for another Dunkirk-style evacuation.”⁶⁸

French fear of waning U.S. commitment came from the Pleven Plan, later renamed the European Defense Community (EDC), which called for a single European army that all signatory nations would have a say in directing. The plan would allow for West-German participation but would forbid West Germany from having a national army. The EDC found little backing in Europe, but the U.S. and West Germany supported it because each nation believed German participation was essential to Forward Defense. The EDC was drafted in the spring of 1952, but several nations failed to ratify, including the French, because there was no outright commitment of the United States and United Kingdom to provide forces in the defense of the European

⁶⁵ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁶ Geary, “NATO Battlefield Strategy for the Conventional Defense of Central Europe,” 25.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁸ Blackwell, Jr., “In the Laps of the Gods: The Origins of NATO Forward Defense,” 70.

continent.⁶⁹ These concerns were alleviated with the establishment of the Western European Union (WEU), which gave France the guarantees it needed of U.S. and British commitment to European defense.

The French were not alone, however, in their advocacy for a positional defense. The West Germany Social Democratic Party had concerns that the allies would not rearm West Germany, and the state would be left defenseless in the wake of a Soviet Invasion. The WEU alleviated these concerns as well, because it granted West Germany sovereignty, ended the French, British, and U.S. occupation, and allowed for the rearming of West Germany. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer recognized that the Rhine defense would sacrifice valuable territory and argued for a positional Forward Defense beginning at the Inter-German border.⁷⁰ With the participation of West Germany in European defense, the available forces for defense doubled, and NATO forces could now cover the entire European front.⁷¹

While NATO reached agreement on a positional defense, the United States did not yet abandon massive nuclear retaliation because while the forces were available, their readiness was still low. However, the adoption of Flexible Response allowed NATO to implement the strategy of Forward Defense that was crafted in the early 1950s.

The addition of forces from Germany allowed NATO to defend the entire eastern border of West Germany. The WEU provided additional forces from other member nations, notably the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Belgium. The Dutch, West Germans, British, and Belgian forces each provided a corps for the Northern Army Group, which defended the North German

⁶⁹ Geary, "NATO Battlefield Strategy for the Conventional Defense of Central Europe," 28.

⁷⁰ Blackwell, Jr., "In the Laps of the Gods: The Origins of NATO Forward Defense," 70.

⁷¹ Geary, "NATO Battlefield Strategy for the Conventional Defense of Central Europe," 40.

Plain. West Germany and the United States each provided two corps for the Central Army Group in the Fulda Gap and further south.⁷² France declined to participate in this Forward Defense.

While the French ratified the WEU agreement, French President Charles de Gaulle announced on 21 February 1966 that all French troops would pull out of Germany.⁷³ While this was a shock to Allied forces, Geary argues that “The French attitude was known for quite some time.”⁷⁴ This required that the United States commit a larger number of forces and increase its responsibility as a main defender of the European continent.⁷⁵ This larger responsibility led to grave concerns among the United States’ European allies when congressional budget cuts called for force reductions in Germany, concerns that were later alleviated with the implementation of REFORGER.

A larger U.S. commitment to Europe was difficult given the fiscal realities. As the Vietnam War placed an enormous financial burden on the United States, congressional budgetary restrictions forced the Defense Department to reduce the number of standing troops in Germany by two brigades.⁷⁶ The plan was to consider the troops in these brigades as units assigned to United States Army Europe (USAREUR), while stationing them in the United States. Tauschweizer writes that, “This was essentially an accounting measure which withdrew 34,000 combat and support troops, while leaving them on the books. USAREUR commanders expressed their dissatisfaction with the solution and pointed out that it made no sense to count units that were not actually present in Europe.”⁷⁷ If the goal of a Forward Defense is to ensure that an invading force does not penetrate deeply into allied territory, and the way to hold a forward line

⁷² Ibid., 45.

⁷³ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁶ Tauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army*, 185.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 185.

is with an abundance of troops, then force reductions of 34,000 combat and support troops essentially left Western Europe poorly defended against a potential Soviet invasion, which caused grave concerns among the United States' European allies. Military planners had to craft a strategy that would allow for the defense of Western Europe without unduly depleting the U.S. military budget or abandoning any West German Territory. The answer was REFORGER.

At the Trilateral Talks, the NATO allies agreed that one brigade of the 24th Infantry Division, along with that brigade's support troops, would remain stationed at the Inter-German border. The two other brigades would redeploy back to the United States and remain on-call if the Soviet Union attempted an invasion.⁷⁸ In the case of a Soviet attack, the two U.S. based brigades would redeploy back to Germany to aid in the defense of Western Europe, and the German based brigade would serve as an initial defense force. This is called dual-basing: when a military unit, in this case the 24th Infantry Division, is assigned to one area, U.S. Army Europe, but separately housed at different bases. This dual-basing allowed the Department of Defense to allocate resources to the ongoing Vietnam War and still maintain that they were prepared and ready to defend Europe from the Soviet Union. However, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom determined that designating these forces to Western European defense was not enough, and the United States committed to conducting an annual exercise to rehearse the redeployment of forces, which proved to be a monumental logistical challenge and feat.

The logistical planning and execution of the REFORGER exercises will be covered in the next section; however, it is important to note that establishing the REFORGER exercises proved the U.S. commitment to avoid nuclear war. REFORGER was a military necessity in the latter

⁷⁸ Ibid., 186.

years of the Cold War because it allowed the United States and Western Europe to maintain the strategy of Flexible Response through the devoted training of conventional forces to conduct a limited war, therefore ensuring that a potential Soviet invasion would not lead to global catastrophe.

The Execution of REFORGER

Understanding the context and nuance of Cold War diplomacy and military strategy is only a fraction of the history related to the REFORGER exercises. The last section of this thesis will cover earlier rapid deployment exercises that allowed REFORGER to be successful, the logistical network that provided the needed materiel for redeployed troops, the details of Exercise REFORGER I at an operational level, and small unit tactics employed in a Field Training Exercise (FTX).

Analyzing the conduct and logistics of the REFORGER exercises makes clear how large a feat it was to rapidly deploy forces from the United States to Europe with adequate combat troops, support personnel, needed materiel, and proper transportation. While the REFORGER series was indeed the longest running in Department of Defense history, it was not the first of the large-scale rapid deployment exercises undertaken by the United States. REFORGER I in January 1969 drew on established methods and procedures from another exercise conducted in October 1963, Operation BIG LIFT. Much like REFORGER, the purpose of BIG LIFT was to prepare for the rapid reinforcement of NATO, “To stem a likely attack by Warsaw Pact forces in West Germany.”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ David Goldman, “Operation BIG LIFT,” [www.army.mil](https://www.army.mil/article/28749/operation_big_lift), accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.army.mil/article/28749/operation_big_lift.

During Operation BIG LIFT, soldiers from the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas, assembled and boarded flights bound for the line of Forward Defense in West Germany. After nearly three days and 200 flights, 15,000 troops from the 2nd Armored Division, two additional artillery battalions, and various transportation units arrived in Germany. After arrival, the combat troops collected equipment from various depots. This allowed the units to limit the amount of materiel they needed to transport from Fort Hood to Germany, thus avoiding a logistical nightmare and providing a contingency plan if another supply chain crisis, similar to the Berlin Crisis of 1961, limited the ability of troops to transport goods.⁸⁰

After collecting their needed materiel, the 2nd Armored Division joined the Seventh U.S. Army stationed in Europe and took part in an FTX that simulated a battle along the border between East and West Germany. “Altogether, nearly 46,000 personnel, 900 tanks, and hundreds of trucks and armored personnel carriers participated. The Air Force flew 759 sorties in support as well.”⁸¹ This exercise was the first of its size and nature in Central Europe and ended with the umpires declaring the Blue (Allied) forces victorious, with the Orange (Enemy) forces having been defeated in tactical maneuvers. While the tactical aspects of the exercise were arguably only marginally beneficial, the true benefit of BIG LIFT was the opportunity it presented to the U.S. Army VII Corps, which conducted a command post exercise in conjunction with the FTX. This simulated the actions the VII Corps would take in the case of a Soviet invasion and helped allied forces on an operational and strategic level.⁸²

BIG LIFT was considered successful because the United States was able to deploy a large force overseas, have that force collect needed equipment from pre-determined sites, and take part

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

in an FTX that simulated a Central European conventional land battle. Not all, however, agreed that BIG LIFT was as successful as some leaders, like President Kennedy, believed. Much of the collected equipment was faulty and outdated, meaning that the materiel was below the required standard. The units involved were augmented prior to deployment, therefore artificially enhancing the readiness of various Rapid Reaction Forces (RRF). The cost of the exercise was more than twice what was originally planned, showing that these exercises were not as cost effective as congressional budgeters were led to believe.⁸³ While operation BIG LIFT was an imperfect exercise, it provided the United States and NATO with a template of lessons to draw from when conducting large-scale exercises that prepared for the defense of Western Europe.

BIG LIFT was not, however, the only precursor to REFORGER. On 30 December 1964, a memorandum regarding STRIKE Command Operational Plan 629 (OPLAN 629), was sent out to commanders of more than ten agencies within the United States Army. STRIKE, standing for Swift Tactical Reaction in Every Known Environment, was responsible for maintaining high degrees of deployment readiness of forces assigned to the Continental United States. OPLAN 629 required all divisions in the USARSTRIKE Command to maintain a Divisional Rapid Reaction Force (DRRF) and spelled out the procedures to test the capability of each DRRF to move from their home station by rail. Operation BIG LIFT did not present any major challenge in moving troops from their home stations, but OPLAN 629 provided guidance and support which ensured uniformity and success in the initial deployment phases of either exercises or operations. OPLAN 629 also described Berlin, Cuba, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East as

⁸³ Ibid.

possible hot zones requiring DRRF, thus indicating that a plan to standardize deployment was needed.⁸⁴

Similar to OPLAN 629, CINCSTRIKE (Commander in Chief Strike Forces) General Plan 765, distributed on 1 October 1968, provided a standard for forces participating in rapid reaction exercises.⁸⁵ General Plan 765 reiterated much of the information and guidelines laid out in OPLAN 629, but standardized it for USARSTRIKE exercises such as BOLD SHOT, BRIM FIRE, BOLD SHOT/BRIM FIRE, and BOXER DRILL. These exercises drilled the techniques and procedures that would be necessary for a military deployment. BOLD SHOT involved the deployment of a Joint Task Force (JTF), a DRRF, and USAFSTRIKE (United States Air Force STRIKE Forces) in a parachute assault of an objective area. BRIM FIRE involved the deployment of a JTF, consisting of nonairborne USARSTRIKE and USAFSTRIKE Forces. BOLD SHOT/BRIM FIRE was simply a combination of airborne and nonairborne forces in a JTF, and BOXER DRILL involved the alerting and planning for the deployment of a JTF at the command level.⁸⁶

The remainder of General Plan 765 spelled out the duties of various military commanders and provided specific guidance on how to conduct these exercises. The document meticulously planned the notification to STRIKE Forces, the required transportation, the details on logistics and personnel, and the instructions for command posts. While REFORGER was conducted under USAREUR and NATO auspices, these predecessors showed the United States military had

⁸⁴Headquarters, United States Continental Army Command, United States Army Force, Strike Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia 23351 "USCONARC/USARSTRIKE OPLAN 629, Exercise Quickfire (Rail)," December 30, 1964, Exercise REFORGER I, Entry P50095, Box 2, RG 358, NARA II.

⁸⁵ Wells, R.J., "CINCSTRIKE General Plan 765, Rapid Reaction Exercises," November 29, 1968, Folder Exercise REFORGER I, Entry P50095, Box 2, RG 358, NARA II.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

experience in performing large scale military exercises and deployments at a moment's notice. Moreover, a memorandum for the Secretary of the General Staff, written by General Bruce Palmer, the U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff, stated that planners would, "Review the lessons of BIG LIFT and actions that have been subsequent to that time to determine what major gaps, if any, exist in our plans and preparations for the REFORGER Exercise."⁸⁷ Thus BIG LIFT, and likely other plans from the USARSTRIKE Command, aided in the planning and execution of REFORGER.

REFORGER I was the first in the twenty-four year-long exercise series and was the product of months of planning and preparation. The first document that shows the beginning of REFORGER I planning is a fact sheet given to the Acting Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army on 28 March 1968, while the aftermath of the Tet Offensive was still roiling Vietnam. It describes the approved funds (\$11.1 million) and force package for the exercise.⁸⁸ The Exercise Concept of the United States Commander in Chief Europe (USCINCEUR) is shown in figure 1, enumerating the various phases of REFORGER I.

⁸⁷ Bruce Palmer, Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Staff, "Troop List for REFORGER Exercise," August 27, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

⁸⁸ W.C. Gribble, "Fact Sheet: Funds for the FY REFORGER Exercise," March 28, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

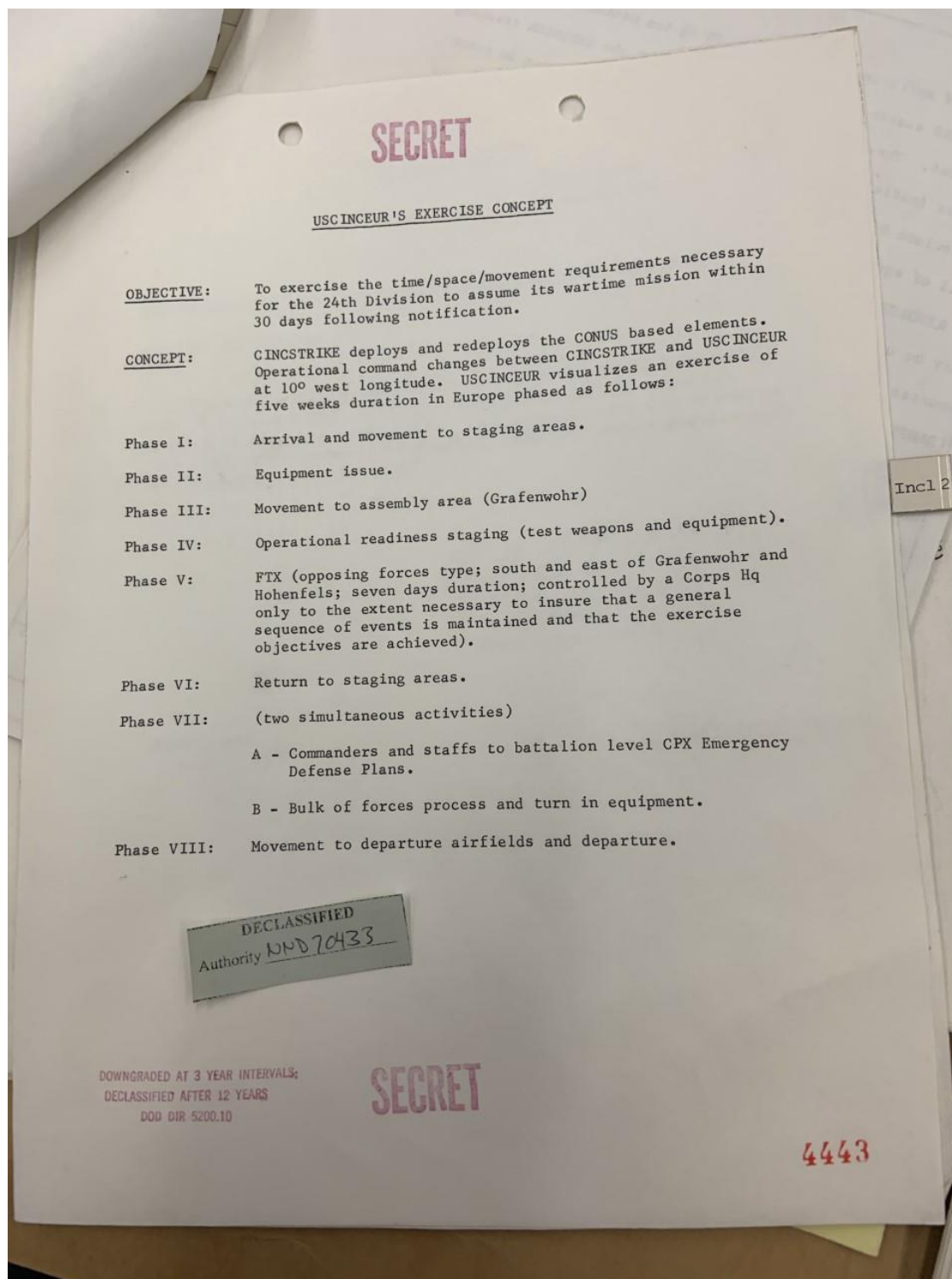


Figure 1: Exercise Concept⁸⁹

⁸⁹ U.S. Army Europe, "USCINCEUR's Exercise Concept," March 28, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

Documents from August 1968 indicate hesitation on the part of the JCS due to lack of funding. A memorandum from General Bruce Palmer, Jr., U.S. Vice Chief of Staff, states that, “The JCS concluded that fiscal considerations override the valid military and political requirements to conduct REFORGER I...and it was proposed to postpone the exercise. However, final action depends on decisions by DOD and State.”⁹⁰ Fiscal concerns from the JCS were legitimate, as illustrated by the cost of previous exercises, but the commitment to conduct REFORGER took precedence. “In view of NATO commitment of the 24th Inf Div [division] and other REFORGER units and the requirement to redeploy these units to USAREUR within 30 days, the Army staff is taking measures to expedite delivery of required equipment and assignment of sufficient personnel to enable the units to attain the desired state of readiness by the end of CY [Calendar year] 68.”⁹¹ This was a concern in the Army staff because the 24th Infantry Division, the unit slated for REFORGER I, was operating below capacity in personnel and equipment due to the competing demands of the Vietnam War.⁹² Despite the possibility of REFORGER being cancelled or postponed, the Army staff knew that preparation was still essential. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) worked to ensure the units participating would reach 100 percent personnel capacity by the end of September 1968 and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics (DCSLOG) worked to ensure the 24th Infantry Division reached its equipment goals by the 1st of October.⁹³ With these projections, the Army staff believed that the 24th Infantry Division would be “Filled, equipped, and trained to participate in Exercise REFORGER I by 31 December 1968.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Palmer, “Troop List for REFORGER Exercise.”

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Bruce Palmer, “Memo from DA to CGUSCONARC: Exercise REFORGER I,” August 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

⁹⁴ Palmer, “Troop List for REFORGER Exercise.”

With the necessary personnel and logistics issues being resolved, the staff began detailed planning for REFORGER I. A planning conference was scheduled for mid-October 1968 with the goal to “Formulate plans for preparation and movement of Exercise REFORGER I units to and from departure airfields, and resolve those problems [related to personnel, equipment, and training] CONUS-based units may have in preparing for Exercise REFORGER I.”⁹⁵ The conference, hosted by USAREUR, was held on 15 October in Heidelberg, Germany.⁹⁶ The planners covered forty-five points that spelled out the aspects of REFORGER that were yet to be solidified. While many of the details of the conference are not germane to this thesis, everything from the classification for units in a Temporary Change of Station to the basic equipment that soldiers could bring was covered. However, the notes on this conference indicate that funding for the exercise was still awaiting approval.⁹⁷

An essential aspect of the exercise would be the drawing of equipment from the POMCUS sites. The POMCUS program, starting before Exercise Big Lift, was what allowed the United States to rapidly deploy thousands of troops to Europe in less than 30 days and have them prepared to fight upon arrival, which was the required commitment to NATO. Nearly all of the 24th Infantry Division’s equipment was already in Germany stored at various POMCUS locations and would be drawn for use in the REFORGER I gunnery exercises and FTX. Ensuring that troops were successful in drawing this equipment required a test of the operations of the POMCUS sites. In November 1968, Exercise CAR CREW was conducted to “test the techniques

⁹⁵ Howard Greer, “Disposition Form: Exercise REFORGER I Planning Conference,” September 13, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

⁹⁶ “Notes from USAREUR Exercise REFORGER I Planning Conference, 15 October 1968,” October 15, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

and procedures to receive REFORGER forces in USAREUR.”⁹⁸ A battalion assigned to USAREUR relocated to Rhein Main to simulate the arrival of 24th Infantry Division troops in Germany. They were transported to the POMCUS sites, collected the necessary materiel and vehicles, moved to a training center to test fire the artillery and armored weapons, and then returned the equipment to storage.⁹⁹ The exercise was successful, and REFORGER planners could rest assured knowing that arrival in Germany and collection of materiel was meticulously planned and organized. The next step was to solidify plans for the shipment of troops from the United States to Germany.

In mid-December planners attended a movement planning conference for REFORGER I at the Pentagon to generate movement plans for the exercise.¹⁰⁰ This conference determined that the advanced party dates for REFORGER I would be 6-19 January, with the main body being deployed during a 50-hour period from 19-22 January, with flights arriving in Germany every thirty minutes. Nuremberg was listed as the primary airfield, with Fürstenfeldbruck and Rhein Main as alternates. Major Brice Bell, the REFORGER Action Officer, stated:

The conference was worthwhile and very productive. By having it at JCS level, all required actions were completed expeditiously without deferral or postponement because of indecisiveness. Those areas where the representatives could not speak with authority were immediately covered by a telephone call to the authority and an answer obtained. At the conclusion of the conference, therefore, there were no U.S. Army unresolved problems.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Brice Bell, “Observers to Exercise CAR CREW,” October 8, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Brice Bell, “Report of Attendance at Exercise REFORGER I Movement Planning Conference,” December 16, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.,

Planning for movement was now complete, but commanders still worried about the impact of personnel and equipment shortages on unit training.

These concerns were addressed in a training staff visit to Fort Riley, Kansas, from 15-17 December. The purpose of the visit was to observe soldiers of the 24th Infantry Division in their training to determine if they were ready to deploy. Staff officers observed various units in training and commented on four issues. The 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment was training the procedures to load tanks onto flat rail cars, and despite German rail cars being narrower than those in the United States, the training was considered worthwhile. Units based in the continental United States did not often have the opportunity to conduct these operations, so the training provided needed knowledge for the loading of tanks collected from POMCUS sites.¹⁰²

The 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment conducted various field training exercises under their company commanders; these exercises covered different aspects that commanders believed needed additional emphasis prior to deployment. These companies were trained on the selection and preparation of defensive position, the proper placement of personnel and weapons for defense, and various small-unit field movements. The report author, Major Scholl, noted that, “Personnel participating in the training were alert and appeared interested.”¹⁰³ Soldiers in the 2nd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment were also conducting training, but focused on attack drill and clearing objectives. Major Scholl wrote that, “Personnel moved aggressively and with enthusiasm. [But] During one mounted attack over an open area it was felt that personnel dismounted earlier than might have been desirable or necessary.”¹⁰⁴ This type of training shows a

¹⁰² Major Scholl, “Disposition Form: Training Staff Visit, Fort Riley, Kansas,” December 18, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

dedication on the part of both commanders and soldiers in preparation for the first REFORGER exercise, and visiting staff noticed marked improvement in the conduct and ability of soldiers in the 24th Infantry Division.

The report noted personnel shortages for deploying units, as the 24th Infantry Division was still short approximately 400 soldiers. However, more soldiers were due to arrive, and the expectation was that all units would be at 100 percent capacity by the end of December.¹⁰⁵ These issues regarding capacity were addressed in a second staff visit that occurred on 24 December 1968. Prior to this visit, actions were taken to ensure that personnel would be transferred to units that were short of their deployable strength. 150 additional riflemen were requested for the 24th Infantry Division; 85 soldiers were reassigned from the Skill Development Base at Fort Benning, Georgia, while 80 recent graduates from Advance Individual Training were being diverted from Europe to the 24th Infantry Division. Furthermore, 100 personnel were reassigned from the 1st Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment to the 24th Infantry Division. Colonel James Patterson, the DCSPER, noted that, “As a result of the actions outlined above which have been and are to be taken it is expected that the 24th Infantry Division will be capable of participating in Exercise REFORGER I with the required 10,512 personnel.”¹⁰⁶ Continued evaluation of troop numbers, training, and communications allowed the planners of Exercise REFORGER I to supplement the 24th Infantry Division until it was at full strength, figure out how to ship over 5,000 troops to Europe in a 50 hour window, and ensure that troops knew how to collect their equipment after arriving in Europe. This preparation set the model for all future rapid deployment exercises in the REFORGER series.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ James Patterson, “Report of Staff Visit,” December 24, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

On 30 December 1968, the headquarters at Fort Riley, Kansas, issued the movement order for units that were taking part in REFORGER I. The reporting date for the Advanced Party was 19 January 1969, with the Main Party reporting on 22 January 1969. Forces would redeploy back to the United States between 8 February and 15 April. Below, in Figure 2, is the graph that shows the Unit, Unit Identification Code, Number of Officers, Warrant Officers, and Enlisted Men that were set to deploy.

DECLASSIFIED
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FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS FORT RILEY
Fort Riley, Kansas 66442

MOVEMENT ORDER
NUMBER 30

30 December 1968

TC 013. TEMPORARY CHANGE OF STATION is directed. Return proper station upon completion of mission.

UNIT	UIC	OFF	WO	EM
24th Inf Div, HHC (-)	WAQJAA	21	0	134
24th MP Co (-)	WAQKAA	5	1	157
24th Sig Bn (-)	WAQMAA	45	1	471
3d Engr Bn (-)	QAP7AA	34	2	666
1st Bde, 24th Inf Div, HHC (-)	WAONAA	18	3	107
2d Bde, 24th Inf Div, HHC (-)	WAOPAA	17	2	109
2d Squad, 9 Cav (-)	WAP9AA	31	1	611
24th Inf Div Arty, HHC (-)	WAQRAA	18	4	167
1st Bn, 13th FA (-)	WAQBAA	40	2	508
2d Bn, 7th FA (-)	WAP8AA	40	3	507
3d Bn, 11th FA (-)	WAQAAA	29	2	463
24th AG Co, Admin (-)	WAOTAA	8	0	92
24th Med Bn (-)	WAQVAA	18	0	263
24th Inf Div S&T Bn (-)	WAQVAA	22	2	367
24th Inf Div Spt HHC Cmd & Band	WANSAA	12	0	95
724th Maint Bn (-)	WAN3AA	25	6	504
2d Bn, 21st Inf (-)	WAN6AA	40	1	768
1st Bn, 19th Inf (-)	WAQCAA	43	1	765
1st Bn, 34th Inf (-)	WAQXAA	43	1	765
2d Bn, 34th Inf (-)	WAQYAA	40	1	768
5th Bn, 32d Armor (-)	WAZDAA	32	2	499
1st Bn, 70th Armor (-)	WAQOAA	31	2	500
2d Bn, 70th Armor (-)	WAQ1AA	29	2	502
24th MI Det (-)	WBV4AA	9	4	31
Co D, 1st CS Bn (-)	WC7TDO	3	3	139

TDY to: Federal Republic Germany (FRG)
WP date: 5-21 Jan 69
Rept date: Advance Party NLT 19 Jan 69
Main Body NLT 22 Jan 69
Pd: NTE 100 days
Approx mvmt str: OFF WO EM AGG
653 46 9958 10657

201-102

Figure 2: Movement Order REFORGER I

¹⁰⁷ Melvin Williams, Department of the Army, Headquarters Fort Riley, Fort Riley, Kansas, 66442, "Movement Order Number 30," December 30, 1968, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

This preparation for REFORGER I was extensive, and necessarily so. REFORGER I was the first of its series, and the preparation taken would provide a template for all subsequent exercises to follow.

On 3 January 1969 at 23:34 hours Exercise REFORGER I was initiated, and the Fort Riley Movement Control Group (MCG) began the process to stage and transport cargo and troops.¹⁰⁸ A hangar at Marshall Army Air-Field (AAF) was dedicated to the staging and palletization of equipment for the exercise. All baggage and equipment were shipped from Marshall AAF to Forbes Air Force Base (AFB) on 2 ½ ton trucks prior to departure. Baggage for personnel, however, were sent on the day of departure to ensure that it would not be separated from the troops.¹⁰⁹ During this process the MCG noticed very few issues that needed rectifying, and the issues that did arise were quickly solved and noted for future exercises.¹¹⁰ Personnel were transported to Forbes AFB in military and commercial buses and a few tactical vehicles 2 ½ hours before their flight time to allow for travel, briefing, and onboarding. The deployment of troops to Germany for REFORGER I was split into three separate phases. The torch party, containing command, signal, and supply elements, deployed between 4 and 7 January. The advance party, with supervisors, maintenance personnel, and vehicle operators arrived between 8 and 19 January. The main body, mostly comprised of combat troops, deployed in under 45 hours from 19-21 January, and met with the advanced party and their equipment in Grafenwöhr, West Germany.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Willey Darro, Department of the Army Headquarters, Fort Riley, Kansas 66442, "After Action Report, Exercise REFORGER I," May 27, 1969, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹¹¹ James Elder and David Webster, "Trip Report-REFORGER I/CRESTED CAP I/CARBIDE ICE," February 13, 1969, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

The advanced party personnel were responsible for the collection and transportation of equipment from the various POMCUS sites and would have it ready for test firing upon arrival of the main body forces. Major General Linton S. Boatwright, the 24th Infantry Division Commander, expressed concerns over the loading of tracked vehicles onto rail cars, but the expertise of troops “Permitted them to meet their three-hour time limit in every instance.”¹¹² Over 900 tracked vehicles, along with their operating personnel, were brought to Grafenwöhr aboard 26 trains.¹¹³ Maj. Gen. Boatwright noted that only two minor road accidents occurred and only 2.3 percent of vehicles needed repair, prompting him to boast, “This exercise has come about as close to following its plan as any I’ve ever seen.”¹¹⁴ Boatwright praised the personnel in theater, noting, “The logisticians currently operating in this theater are some of the best I’ve ever worked with.”¹¹⁵ There is every indication that the storing of equipment in the POMCUS program was successful, and that the collection of equipment, materiel, and vehicles ran smoothly.

On 20 January 1969 the first plane carrying troops from the 5,000-man main body arrived in Nuremburg. The plane, carrying 51 members of the 5th Surgical Hospital from Fort Knox, Kentucky, landed at 09:03 local time. The next plane was set to arrive at 12:55, and the C-141 Starlifters from the United States Air Force were scheduled to arrive every 30 minutes, with the last arriving at 19:30 on the 21st. General Howell M. Estes, Commander of the Military Airlift Command, greeted the plane and said, “This exercise does not herald anything especially

¹¹² United States Information Service, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: Major General Boatwright,” January 28, 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry: P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

¹¹³ United States Information Service, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release: REFORGER I/CRESTED CAP Col. Kenneth R. Bull,” January 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry: P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

¹¹⁴ “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: Major General Boatwright.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

significant in terms of strategic mobility. Rather, I would ask that all of you pay more attention to what I think is the true essential demonstration this morning, teamwork.”¹¹⁶ General Estes spoke true; the amount of planning, preparation, and teamwork between the Army, Air Force, and all units involved in REFORGER I allowed it to succeed. However, while it is true that REFORGER was not the first rapid mobilization and response exercise of its era, planners were able to transport 12,000 U.S. Army troops from the United States to Germany in just fifteen days. Therefore, the deployment of forces in REFORGER I was significant, and set the standard for all future rapid reinforcement exercises and operations.

After arriving in Germany, main body troops rode in hourly convoys and rail shipments to the Seventh Army Training Center in Grafenwöhr, and by 21 January over 7,000 troops were preparing for Field Training Exercise CARBIDE ICE, set to begin on 29 January.¹¹⁷ Before the FTX could start, however, the weapons, tanks, and artillery pieces needed to be tested. This was done to ensure functionality after long periods of storage in the POMCUS sites and to provide troops with additional training in sighting-in their equipment. An M-60A1 tank from the 1st Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment fired the first test round, and began the process to zero-in, which requires three consecutive hits in an 18-inch target stationed 1,200 meters away. Other tanks, mortars, machine guns, and rifles were test fired in preparation for Exercise CARBIDE

¹¹⁶ United States Information Service, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: General Estes,” January 20, 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

¹¹⁷ United States Information Service, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: Nuremburg, Germany, January 21,” January 21, 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

Ice.¹¹⁸ On 28 January, Major General Boatright ordered the movement of troops to initial positions for the FTX.¹¹⁹

U.S. based troops of the 24th Infantry Division were dubbed the Blue Forces and were pitted against the Orange Forces, comprised of European based troops from the same division. CARBIDE ICE was a free-play maneuver that was “designed to evaluate the operational capability of forces, provide combined arms training, sharpen the troop’s combat skills, and check out repair, supply, and management techniques in battle conditions.”¹²⁰ Umpires for the FTX were stationed in Blue and Orange Force headquarters all the way down to individual companies conducting field operations. This was to ensure that the exercise did not get out of hand and combat outcomes were adjudicated fairly. The Air Force was assigned to conduct an average of 88 sorties per day, on behalf of both sides. The scales were tipped in the favor of the Blue Forces, which boasted an Honest John Tactical Missile battalion, capable of launching nuclear-tipped missiles.¹²¹ While a main purpose of REFORGER was to respond to Soviet aggression without resorting to nuclear power, it was essential that field units have access to tactical nuclear arms to instantly respond to Soviet escalation.

Lieutenant General Donald V. Bennett, the Commander of the U.S. Army VII Corps that was one of two corps tasked with the defense of Europe, was the maneuver director for Exercise CARBIDE ICE. Bennett iterated the exercise goals, “To achieve this maximum training I have to make sure both sides conduct delaying actions, covering forces actions, defensive action, day and

¹¹⁸ United States Information Service, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release: Vilseck, Germany--REFORGER I/CRESTED CAP,” January 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

¹¹⁹ “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: Major General Boatwright.”

¹²⁰ United States Information Services, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: CARBIDE ICE Layout,” January 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

¹²¹ Ibid.

night withdrawals, and both counter and fixed attacks.”¹²² Not only was CARBIDE ICE helpful in training combat troops, but it provided training for high command headquarters as well.

Umpires adjudicated the results of unit maneuver and simulated combat actions. Combat outcomes were somewhat artificial, and the training improved the functioning of headquarters to a greater extent than it did small units. This essentially means that the main military purpose of REFORGER was to rehearse the deployment and defense of Europe at a strategic and operational level. That does not mean, however, that the United States and NATO would make that fact known. CARBIDE ICE lasted from 29 January to 4 February 1969, and the last United States European Command Press release said of the FTX, “The battle was over, no one was killed, no home or crops destroyed, no vehicles lost, but valuable training was obtained; training on the terrain that REFORGER troops might someday be called on to defend.”¹²³ The training conducted in Exercise REFORGER I and FTX CARBIDE ICE allowed the United States to show NATO that U.S. forces were capable of reinforcing and defending western Europe within thirty days of mobilization.

The last essential part of Exercise REFORGER I was the repairing and returning of equipment back to the POMCUS sites and the departure of main body and rear party troops. The first plane departed Nuremberg Airport at 12:40 on 6 February 1969. The 5,000 troops in the main body for REFORGER I would all be back in their CONUS bases by 22 February. The remaining soldiers prepared to return all equipment to the POMCUS sites and were set to fly out of Rhein-Main Air Base on 14 February. The commander of the Surgical Team, Captain Robert

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ United States Information Services, Bonn, “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release: Exercise CARBIDE ICE,” February 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

R. Turman said, "I think we learned a lot during REFORGER I."¹²⁴ He did not go into any detail, but it is clear that REFORGER I gave necessary training to all units that were responsible for Western European defense. REFORGER I was a success in many ways. Not only did it provide needed training, but it fulfilled NATO commitments and tested the U.S. military logistical network. Moreover, it showed that such an exercise was possible and provided an outline that REFORGER exercises for the next 23 years could follow.

Subsequent exercises contained many strategic, operational, and logistical similarities to the first. The goal of REFORGER, one that remained unchanged from its inception in 1969 to the last exercise in 1993, was to rapidly deploy CONUS-based forces to Germany to rehearse the defense of Western Europe in the event of a Soviet invasion. This exercise had to be conducted annually to ensure that all forces committed to the defense of NATO had a high level of readiness and ability. Much of the processes that were used to ship troops and materiel from the United States to Germany did not change. There were, however, some notable differences in subsequent exercises that show how REFORGER evolved. For example, it should be noted that the naming of REFORGER exercises from the number in the sequence to the year it was conducted was changed after REFORGER V conducted in 1973; the next exercise in the series was called REFORGER 74.

REFORGER II, 5 October to 4 December 1970, was conducted in a similar way to REFORGER I. The CONUS based troops deployed from the United States to Germany, collected their materiel from POMCUS sites, conducted gunnery exercises, completed a FTX, and redeployed back to the United States after placing the equipment back in POMCUS. These

¹²⁴ United States Information Services, Bonn, "U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER/CRESTED CAP Feb 6," February 6, 1969, File 232-03 Troop Test Files (71) REFORGER III, COFF 31 December 71 Ret WNRC Jan 73, permanent, Entry P50095, RG 338, NARA II.

were the tasks that were the main tasks for every REFORGER exercise. What was constantly changing, however, were the units involved. The main unit for REFORGER I was the 24th Infantry Division; when REFORGER II was planned and conducted, the task of rapidly deploying to Germany was given to the 1st Mechanized Infantry Division.¹²⁵ It is unclear why the 1st Infantry Division took part in Exercise REFORGER II, but it is clear that the units involved in the REFORGER exercises did not always remain the same.

Another major difference between the various exercises was the number of troops involved. The Secretary of Defense approved 12,660 soldiers for Exercise REFORGER I.¹²⁶ 10,657 of these troops deployed from the United States to Germany to take part in the exercise.¹²⁷ REFORGER II had an authorized force of 12,247 troops, and while these forces had similar obstacles relating to division readiness as seen in REFORGER I, there was little difference in scale when comparing the troops that deployed.¹²⁸ However, when looking at later exercises, like REFORGER 88, the V Corps fielded more than 50,000 troops to take part in FTX CERTAIN CHALLENGE. The VII Corps, which face off against the V Corps in the FTX, fielded a comparable force.¹²⁹ REFORGER 88 still featured the steps of all REFORGER exercises, but it was conducted on a massive scale. The reasoning behind the scale of this REFORGER is unknown, but it did not impact the effectiveness of the exercise; it merely required more preparation. Similar to the preparation seen with Exercises BIG LIFT and CAR CREW, OPLAN 629, and General Plan 765, the V Corps conducted Exercise Caravan Guard 88

¹²⁵ Nowlin, "Briefing on REFORGER II Planning," October 1970, War Department Decimal 354.2, Entry A1 1689, Box 891, RG 319, NARA II.

¹²⁶ Palmer, "Troop List for REFORGER Exercise."

¹²⁷ Williams, "Movement Order Number 30."

¹²⁸ Nowlin, "Briefing on REFORGER II Planning."

¹²⁹ "The Victory Corps 1988," 1988, 04 -5 1988, U.S. Army Heritage Education Center.

which, “Stressed rapid movement and solid command and control techniques.”¹³⁰ This showed that emphasis on training remained high throughout the entire exercise series.

Lastly, while the main strategic goal of REFORGER remained unchanged for its entirety, the operational focus changed over time. REFORGER I focused on providing training for troops in all types of offensive and defensive operations that would be needed to counter a Soviet invasion, focusing largely on field movements and small unit tactics.¹³¹ As REFORGER continued, there was still heavy importance placed on how field units conduct the FTX; however, there was also increased emphasis on training for communications, command and control, and cooperation at all levels. FTX CERTAIN SENTINEL in REFORGER 79 emphasized the importance of this communication and cooperation at command levels, which was necessary given the growing size of troops involved.¹³²

The last REFORGER exercise was conducted in 1993, two years after the fall of the Soviet Union. Documents covering REFORGER 92 and 93 are still classified, and despite several Freedom of Information Act requests, remain unavailable for this thesis. It is clear, however, that the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant that the threat of Soviet invasion had ended, necessitating an end to the exercises that were created to stand against it.

Conclusion

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 lifted the world from a state of fear and uncertainty that began in 1945. The end of the Cold War also meant an end to the practices that helped ensure cooperation among western allies, meaning the 24-year long REFORGER exercise series

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “U.S.-EUCOM Press Release on REFORGER I: CARBIDE ICE Layout.”

¹³² “FTX CERTAIN SENTINEL/REFORGER 79 Final After Action Report.”

was also at an end. REFORGER has long been thought of as a monumental exercise series put in place to defend Western Europe from Soviet invasion while also appeasing calls for budgetary restrictions. It is true that the military purpose of these exercises was to rehearse the rapid deployment of forces to Europe, and congressional budget cuts made this politically necessary. This thesis, however, has proven that a main goal of REFORGER was to instill confidence in the United States' commitment to the defense of Western Europe. It was a diplomatic exercise as much as it was a military and political one.

The end of World War II did not bring peace to the European continent. The splitting of the Soviet Union from the Allied Powers propelled the world into yet another conflict that would go on for over four decades. The Korean and Vietnam Wars showed that this Cold War could erupt into a hot war at any time, and that preparation for military action was essential to ensure the defense of Western Europe. The solution for the early years of the Cold War was massive nuclear retaliation, which was problematic if the Western powers wished to have any land or people left to defend. The adoption of Flexible Response and Forward Defense under the Kennedy Administration was a necessary progression in the evolution of Cold War doctrine, and the previously mentioned budgetary restrictions necessitated a program that would convince NATO of ongoing U.S. commitment to Western European defense.

The 1967 Trilateral Agreement is among the most important documents in REFORGER history, because it spells out the process that the United States committed to taking when the need to reinforce NATO forces in Europe arose. REFORGER was initially conceived as a means to reunite the 24th Infantry Division with its advanced brigade stationed in Germany. Those reinforcements, according to the 1967 agreement, would need to deploy within thirty days of mobilization. Exercise REFORGER was conceived and first conducted in 1969 to ensure that the

units called on for the defense of West Germany would be capable of rapid deployment. By the 1980s the United States would increase its commitment in this regard, promising to reinforce NATO with five divisions within thirty days of mobilization. Such a commitment made the conventional defense of West Germany feasible, winding the nuclear clock backwards from midnight.

The Trilateral Agreement, however, also served as a principle diplomatic document, and this thesis has shown that members of several presidential administrations, the U.S. Armed Forces, and the individual soldiers conducting the exercises were aware of this diplomatic mission. It served as a continuing bulwark against the doubts of U.S. commitment in Europe; these doubts from NATO allies were justified because the U.S. Congress continuously lowered the military budget in the early years of REFORGER, causing the budget for military exercises to be cut as well. REFORGER was on the chopping block numerous times throughout its history, but several military, diplomatic, and political leaders argued for its necessity. U.S.-NATO relations during the Cold War were often tenuous, and REFORGER was a reminder that the United States valued the alliance.

Militarily, REFORGER was a tremendous logistical and strategic success. The ability to rapidly deploy thousands of troops to Europe in a matter of weeks in 1969, and days by the 1980s, showed the progression of the logistical network and planning of the U.S. Army, and how quickly it improved. Not only were troops able to deploy rapidly, but the collection of equipment at POMCUS sites proved that strategic depots for materiel were essential in RRF exercises and operations.

This thesis aimed to view REFORGER as its own history and analyze how that history impacted diplomatic relations and the evolution of military strategy. This has been accomplished,

but the research is not yet done. The reaction of the Soviet Union to REFORGER is still unknown, and the archives of the former Soviet Union likely have documentation that could expand this history beyond the perspective of the United States and NATO. Moreover, the impact of REFORGER on future Rapid Reaction Forces would provide a necessary understanding of the exercise series' lasting impact. As time goes on, more documents in the National Archives will be declassified and future researchers can explore these unanswered questions.

REFORGER is an essential part of Cold War history, as it allowed the United States to both maintain good relations with its closest allies and to ensure that its soldiers were fully prepared to face the potential challenges that a Soviet invasion would bring. Moreover, it shows a level of cooperation between the United States and its international allies that is inspiring. Through compromise and dedication, the West was able to prepare and establish a strong defense against an enemy with values and systems that were antithetical to the freedom and self-determination gained by victory over Nazi Germany in 1945. REFORGER, as a historical event, broadly represents the pinnacle of Western unity; a unity that can, and should be, sought after in the post-Cold War era.

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